Martyn Calvin Cowan. *John Owen and the Civil War Apocalypse: Preaching, Prophecy, and Politics.* New York: Routledge, 2018. xvi + 219 pp. $140.00. Review by Carrie Euler, Central Michigan University.

At the end of this new study of John Owen's sermons, Martyn Calvin Cowan asserts that the "most significant conclusion of this analysis is that Owen cannot be treated as an abstracted academic theologian" (183). Someone who is not already an expert in John Owen might be forgiven for not coming to that conclusion, however, as this book is highly theological and fairly abstract in its approach. John Owen (1618–1683), for those who are not experts, was a Congregationalist minister, chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, preacher to Parliament, and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University. While Cowan does do a fine job connecting the content of Owen's sermons with events going on in England at the time—namely his reactions to and interpretations of events in the roughly thirty-year period before, during, and after the Civil War and Interregnum in England—he does not always place the sermons specifically in chronological time or explain seemingly important things like, for example, how Owen came to be preaching before Parliament in the first place or how he was able to keep preaching and publishing at all after the Restoration of 1660. Furthermore, if Cowan's analysis is accurate, the contents of Owen's sermons do not appear to have been very concrete or practical. For example, he was quite vague on what England's church settlement should actually look like during the Interregnum or precisely what the duties of the magistrates were vis-à-vis the clergy.

There are some good reasons for this level of abstraction. Cowan's book is more a work of theology than of history—it is based on his doctoral dissertation in divinity at Cambridge University. In addition, other scholars have already produced books on Owen's life and his more practical theology. Nevertheless, Cowan's approach makes for difficult reading if the reader is not already familiar with this wider literature. This is primarily a book for specialists—not just seventeenth-century specialists, but specialists in Reformed Orthodox theologians of the mid-seventeenth century.

Cowan's main argument is that scholars should not make a sharp distinction between Owen's apocalyptic and his prophetic preaching, and that Owen did not transition in the early 1650s from one to the other, but rather was always both apocalyptic and prophetic at the same time. In making this argument, Cowan offers a corrective to the work of fellow Owen scholars John Wilson and Tai Liu, and he does so through an exhaustive analysis of Owen's sermons. First, he shows how Owen interpreted the events of the times as proof that the Antichrist was growing stronger, most specifically in the 1630s because of creeping Catholicism in the Church of England. Then, in the 1640s, Owen declared that God was showing favor to those that supported Parliament in the Civil Wars; Cowan offers lots of examples of how Owen interpreted various victories and defeats in battle using various passages in the Bible. For Owen, these events were signs that the millenarian rule of Christ on earth was growing nearer, and with God's favor came a responsibility to act and reform in order to prepare for the apocalypse. Thus, Cowan argues, he was prophetic because he thought of himself as a prophet helping the godly to "understand the times" (68) in the context of biblical eschatology and advising them on what to do in the present. However, he was also apocalyptic and, specifically, millenarian, because he thought a future golden age was around the corner.

Cowan offers various chapters on how Owen thought the godly needed to prepare for this golden age, much of which came under the broad, somewhat vague, admonition to strive for "universal holiness" (72). He proposed a set of reforms at Oxford in the 1650s that would have instituted more godly worship in the colleges and severely limited traditional celebrations at the end of the school year. He supported the abolition of episcopacy and encouraged the formation of gathered churches, and he also spoke out against many of the ceremonies in the Book of Common Prayer. Furthermore, he believed the church and state needed to be more separate. He (Owen) used a strange phrase in this context that Cowan never really explains, "the mystery of iniquity" (109), which apparently meant the blending of the powers of the clergy and the magistrate in Catholicism and some Reformed churches, including the Church of England. He declared that the godly in England needed to "untangle" this "mystery of iniquity," namely that

the clergy and the magistrates needed to work together but to respect each other's boundaries and separate duties. Nevertheless, these duties were not very clearly defined. The main duty of magistrates, according to Owen, seems to have been serving the "interest of Christ" (97), whatever that meant. Owen was also fairly ambiguous about what form the government and constitution of England should take and what a church settlement should look like. He claimed to be offering a new "via media" because he wanted limited toleration of dissenters; he thought the true church could accept people who disagreed on "truths which were non-fundamental" (130). (Surprisingly, Cowan does not use the term "adiaphora," so one assumes Owen did not either.) The only clear example of a "fundamental" mentioned by Cowan, however, is a belief in the Trinity, which leaves quite a lot open for discussion.

Cowan makes two further arguments about John Owen. First is that Owen became more and more disillusioned in the 1650s, convinced that the reforms to church and society that were necessary for the coming apocalypse were not proceeding as they should under the Protectorate. This is presumably why he supported the recalling of the Rump Parliament in 1659 and established contact with General Monck before the Restoration. Second, Cowan asserts many times and gives examples of how Owen's eschatology and that of his fellow Congregationalists—for instance, Jeremiah Burroughs—was different from that of the Presbyterians and the Fifth Monarchists, though precisely how it was different is not always abundantly clear.

John Owen and the Civil War Apocalypse is a well-written book. Cowan organizes the chapters very clearly and provides ample evidence for his arguments from Owen's sermons. (Whether or not he is correct in the finer points of theology will have to be left to other reviewers who are experts in seventeenth-century Reformed theology.) Moreover, while it is primarily a specialist contribution, the book is more broadly significant in that it confirms the importance of apocalyptic thought in mainstream Reformed Protestantism and helps to clarify the positions of different religious groups in the 1640s and 1650s. The main weaknesses have already been made apparent: Cowan could be clearer on the background and historical context for Owen and perhaps more honest about just how "abstracted" Owen's theology was. He may have used biblical passages to interpret contemporary and historical events,

but many of his theological and prophetic assertions still strike this reader as tolerably vague and abstract.

Paul Cefalu. *The Johannine Renaissance in Early Modern English Literature and Theology*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. xiv + 352 pp. + 7 illus. $81.00. Review by James Ross Macdonald, University of the South.

In this learned, densely-argued study, Paul Cefalu shows how the writings ascribed to St. John the Evangelist exerted quiet but powerful influence in early modern England. Although his book's title consciously evokes John S. Coolidge's *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (1970), its scope is considerably different: while Coolidge traces the animating energies of English Puritanism back to St. Paul's epistles, Professor Cefalu explores the Fourth Gospel's imaginative imprint across a broad range of religious discourse. He suggests that four main features distinguish the Johannine sensibility from Paul and the synoptic gospels: "a high Christology that emphasizes the divine rather than the human nature of Christ...the belief that salvation is achieved more through revelation than objective atonement and expiatory sin...a realized eschatology according to which eternal life has been achieved and the end-time has already partially arrived ... [and] a robust doctrine of assurance and comfort, usually tied to Johannine eschatology and pneumatology." Moreover, early modern texts within this constellation are linked by "a stylistic and rhetorical approach to representing these theological features that often emulates John's mode of discipleship misunderstanding and irony" (21). This mode of exploring Johannine influence usefully cross-cuts the confessional binaries that frequently define the consideration of early modern religious writing, disclosing unexpected common ground among Catholic and Protestant authors, as well as deepening connections between the magisterial and radical strains of Reformation thought.

This process begins in the first chapter, which examines the institution of the Lord's Supper by way of John 6, above all its famous image of Jesus Christ as the bread of life. Tracing a line of interpretation from St. Augustine's homilies through the Middle Ages to Luther, Zwingli,